

MEETING MINUTES
Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired
April 13, 2007
Sioux Falls, SD

Members Present: Sue Birrenkott, Wesley Scholl, Larry Wheeting, Ed Pinkman, Angie Boddicker, Patrick Czerny, Gaye Mattke, Mike Klimisch. Members Absent: Keith Bundy, Dave Miller, Gayle Aamold, Steve Kelsey, Rita Weber, Kyle Kircher, and Dennis White Shield. Steve Kelsey was present via video conferencing for the strategic planning portion of the meeting. Others Present: Dawn Backer, Ardell Feidler, Becky Blume, Eric Weiss, Nicole Gregor, and Greg Boris.

Larry Wheeting, Vice Chair called the meeting to order.
Introductions were made.

Ed Pinkman made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 2006 meeting. Patrick Czerny seconded the motion, motion carried.

Sue Birrenkott made a motion to approve the agenda. Wesley Scholl seconded, motion carried.

Focus Group: Greg Boris met with the Board to report on his findings from the Focus Group meetings. Focus group participants included individuals who had successful closures in the SBVI vocational rehabilitation program. The Focus Groups met to gather in-depth information on SBVI services with Mr. Boris facilitating the meetings.

There were four sessions for the Focus Group, two in Rapid City and two in Sioux Falls. Staff from the Sioux Falls area

participated in a pilot Focus Group. Nicole Gregor, Senior Secretary from the Rehab Center assisted by recruiting participants, arranging transportation, and attending the meetings to greet guests and take notes and handle local arrangements .

During the Focus Group meetings, Dr. Boris learned that work was important to those who participated. Most people want a job that pays more than minimum wage and individuals take pride in working. Some individuals hid their vision impairment from employers. Participants said they appreciated the services provided by SBVI. Older individuals were concerned with the speed of training and equipment used. The overall consensus was that there are good people working for SBVI, however, those from Rapid City voiced more concerns. Some of the issues may have to do with the limited number of employees in the Rapid City office. Participants in Sioux Falls were more likely to have participated in training at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind than those in Rapid City. Dr. Boris suggested looking at the operation of the Rapid City office compared to the Sioux Falls office.

Transportation issues were a common theme at the Focus Group meetings. The buses do not always run at times people need them. There were also more issues with individuals who experienced vision loss at an older age as they were able to drive prior to their vision loss and had more issues dealing with relying on others for transportation.

Participants in Rapid City expressed that they were uncertain how and if cases could be reopened. Individuals in both areas would like to be informed of what's new in terms of services and assistive technology and would like to know more about support groups. Both areas also felt that employers and members of the

community did not understand capabilities of citizens with vision loss and reasonable accommodations.

Nicole had difficulty finding individuals willing to participate in the focus groups. She made phone calls during the day and also in the evenings and called some individuals several times before reaching them. Her efforts led to an adequate number of participants for the focus groups. Each participant was paid \$25 for participating in the focus groups.

Gaye explained that SBVI does notify consumers of the consumer organizations in an information packet provided at the time individuals apply for services. The packet may need updating to include chapter locations, meeting times, and leader contact information for those interested in participating in "support groups".

The findings from the Focus Groups support some of the goals and strategies the Strategic Planning committee is recommending. Final revisions to the state plan attachments will include consideration of the focus group findings.

If you have any questions regarding the Focus Group meetings or report, contact Greg Boris at gboris@aol.com. Make sure you put something in the subject line regarding SBVI Focus Group.

State Plan: Eric Weiss spoke about the state plan and attachments, public meetings and strategic planning committee meetings and recommendations. A public meeting was held at the Rehab Center on April 12th. The majority of people in attendance were staff and board members. One person from the community attended.

Discussion was also held about beep ball during transition week. If anyone is interested in playing beep ball that week (July 23rd – 27th), please contact Dawn Backer at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. The beep ball game is tentatively planned for Wednesday, July 25th and Board members are encouraged to participate.

Another public meeting is scheduled for April 20th from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Governor's Inn in Pierre. NFB will be hosting the meeting in conjunction with their state convention.

The State Plan is required by RSA. Most years SBVI is only required to submit updated attachments to RSA, however, this year SBVI is required to submit the entire State Plan. Eric and Gaye have updated the attachments and preprint for submission to RSA. The preprint and attachments were emailed to Board members prior to the meeting and are also available in hard copy and braille. The documents are in draft format and will be finalized after implementing suggestions from the focus groups, public meetings and Board of SBVI.

Eric provided a description of the revisions to the attachments. Gaye reviewed minutes from Board meetings from the past year to get the information for Attachment 4.2(c). This attachment includes Board recommendations and the Division's responses as well as activities that the Board has participated in throughout the year. Eric suggested Board members read this attachment and make suggestions for additions or edits.

Attachments 4.8 (b)(1), 4.8 (b)(2), 4.8 (b)(3), and 4.8 (b)(4) are standard and outline cooperation and coordination with other entities.

Attachment 4.10 addresses SBVI's comprehensive system of personnel development and is submitted every year with updates. The attachment explains the agency's approach to training and staff development.

Attachment 4.11(a) is submitted every 3 years. It relates to the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. RSA provided direction that the assessment should be more than a survey, but instead an analysis of information from all sources. The focus group activities, consumer satisfaction surveys and public input are all components of the statewide needs assessment.

Attachment 4.11(b) is resubmitted every year and addresses annual estimates of services and costs of services. SBVI makes projections based on past information.

The Strategic Planning committee has been working on Attachment 4.11 (c)(1) which outlines the goals of SBVI.

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) addresses supported employment services.

Attachment 4.11(d) addresses strategies for obtaining the goals in 4.11(c)(1). Eric went over this attachment in detail with the Board describing recommendations made by the strategic planning committee. He read all the strategies and discussion was held on the following strategies:

Strategy 3.5 – SBVI has agreements with the 121 projects. SBVI counselors travel to the reservations, but setting specific days/hours may be more efficient to encourage contacts with consumers and referral sources.

Strategy 5.1 – SBVI has approached outreach through public service announcements (PSA's) and presentations to various entities. The problem with PSA's is the media isn't obligated to broadcast them or they are broadcast at odd hours when public doesn't have an opportunity to listen. People usually need services before finding out what services are available. More agencies are buying advertising which allows them to target media and times for promotions. Most cities in the state have local access channels that are looking for information to include in their announcements. Jeff Kisecker suggested the PR committee look into this area.

Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes innovation and expansion activities including activities recommended by the Board.

Attachment 6.3 outlines scope and extent of supported employment services.

The Strategic Planning committee has met several times over the past few months both in person and by conference call. The committee is made up of a good mix of people and everyone has put in a lot of hard work to develop goals and strategies to improve services. The attachments that were presented are all draft documents and the committee wants the Board's input prior to finalizing the attachments. The board discussed goals and strategies and made suggestions.

Goal #1 – Improve earnings, benefits and career advancement for underemployed consumers served by SBVI.

The question was asked, how is underemployed defined? The Division will need to identify ways to measure progress toward this goal. The division will seek board input on implementation.

Goal #3 - Provide individuals who are blind or visually impaired and have unique needs or are underserved with specialized services so they can fully access the benefits of vocational rehabilitation services.

This goal addresses special populations, including those with significant disabilities, minorities, those that are unserved or underserved, and those served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

The committee came up with goals and strategies that address many of the areas that were identified through the focus groups. The strategies need to be measurable to be addressed in the state plan. Some strategies may be action steps to accomplish goals as opposed to measurable strategies. Division staff will include items that are edited in a separate document for discussion and follow up by the Board for implementation.

Strategy 1.2 – Provide training to staff to ensure that we instill the message to consumers that independence is the expectation and consumers should focus on developing their abilities in order to promote themselves as desirable employees. Discussion was held on the definition of independence. It was suggested to change the wording to “level of independence”, “financial independence”, or “maximizing individual potential”. The question was asked whether this strategy is measurable.

If you have any questions or comments, the committee would be happy to receive them.

Logo contest: The logo contest idea was discussed at the last Board meeting. SBVI received two entries. The first entry is from Matt Daigle, and is an abstract depiction of a hand holding an eye. The second entry is from Kim Leiferman, and is an

outline of the State of South Dakota with SBVI in print letters and Braille together. The logo will be included on the website, some correspondence, and on the brochure.

SBVI enlisted the Board's input on the submissions. SBVI will be awarding the winner \$50. The contest asked for original artwork with a 2x2 inch submission. The binder with the entries was passed around and decision will be made later in the meeting.

Department of Education: Angie Boddicker gave a report on the Department of Education. Topics included the virtual high school, which offers classes on line; classroom connection, a program that allows students in participating schools to receive laptops; South Dakota received an A in technology in a national report; teacher compensation assistance program is available for teachers as a one time compensation for teachers who go above and beyond; the Board of Education raised the tuition for technical schools to \$74 per credit from \$69; the State Library is distributing its books to other libraries across South Dakota; the Governor's Summer Reading Program is a program for children with visual impairments; Special Education is updating administrative rules to comply with the federal requirements in the reauthorized IDEA. Other topics included the Response to Intervention program which assists struggling students get help before they fail to avoid special education. SD is hoping to get seven pilot schools for the program.

A board member inquired whether anything has been done with accessibility for the virtual high school. Angie replied that it is the school's responsibility.

Parent Connection: Sue Birrenkott reported that the Parent Connection does not have a director at this time. They have re-

advertised the position. Parent Connection is gearing up for their fundraiser, Speed Machine, a car show.

National Federation of the Blind: Mike Klimisch told the Board that the NFB state convention will be held in Pierre on April 20-22 at the Governor's Inn. The reader that he demonstrated for the Board last year can now read currency. The Independence March held in conjunction with the national convention in Atlanta, Georgia, will be held July 3rd.

South Dakota Association of the Blind: Ed Pinkman explained that SDAB had a meeting to revise their bylaws recently.

DSU Computer Course: Jeff Kisecker reported on the computer course CSC 105 that will be offered at DSU in Madison June 18-29, 2007. Students will need to have knowledge of how to use JAWS to complete the class. Dormitory space will be available. Keith Bundy will be sending out more information in the near future. Keith and Jeff talked about offering a pre-JAWS class or requiring a proficiency test to make sure students know how to use the program. Students will be required to have 80 percent skill level in using JAWS before taking the class. The pre-JAWS class will not be offered this year. Offering a JAWS workshop is something the agency could possibly do to help consumers prepare for CSC 105. Keith just got the approval from DSU to offer the course. Instructors are looking for 10-15 students. Keith is also looking into offering this course online through distance education in the future.

Timelines may be an issue with the number of students available to participate since many individuals have summer commitments already.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP): Jeff Kisecker reported on the BEP. According to his numbers, the BEP stayed consistent through the first part of the year compared to last year. If gas prices continue to go up, the numbers for income for BEP will be negatively impacted. The cost of products are going up which impacts profits. EROS cafeteria is in the process of updating in anticipation of hiring of more employees, new menu items will be offered.

The Rest Area Vending is contracted through suppliers to provide beverage machines. Pepsi was awarded several bids that for areas that Coke previously provided service. Chamberlain is the only rest area that Coke was awarded the bid.

South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind: Dawn Backer announced that March 24th was SDRC's 1st anniversary at the new building. It was celebrated by eating a nine pound Nestle Crunch bar.

SDRC has two new employees. Taryn Sietsema is the Home Management instructor and Lori Block is the new secretary at SDRC. SDRC is in the process of purchasing signage for the building. The contractor said the sign should be visible from a block away.

SDRC served 18 people in the past year, which is consistent with the past two years. The employment skills area is in the process of being wired for high speed internet. Wireless internet will be available in the conference rooms and the multi purpose room in the near future. Employment skills has served 50 individuals to date this year. Rehab Services referrals are down compared to previous years.

Transition week will be held July 23-27, 2007. SBVI is working with University of Sioux Falls for use of their dorm rooms.

Transition week includes areas of money management, independence, and social activities. This year a representative from Lutheran Social Services will be giving a presentation on credit cards for the students. Students will also participate in the ADA picnic and a number of other activities.

Bob Smith, SDRC vocational rehabilitation counselor is participating in the University of Littlerock orientation and mobility program. He is currently working on his internship and will become a certified orientation and mobility specialist at the completion of his internship.

SDRC will have two summer interns to assist at SDRC and at the Sioux Falls district office.

Representatives from the state of North Dakota will be touring the Rehab Center on May 16 and 17. They are interested in utilizing SDRC for consumer and staff training.

Dawn recommended that Board members visit the American Foundation of the Blind senior site web site at: www.afb.org/seniorsite. The site has useful information for older individuals with vision loss.

Statewide Independent Living Council: Gaye Mattke reported that the SILC will be hosting a public meeting in Rapid City on May 3rd from 3:00 until 6:00 at the Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn and another public meeting in Sioux Falls at the Sheraton on May 8th from 3:00 to 6:00. Patrick Czerny is the Board representative on the SILC. The SILC is currently seeking nominations for terms that expire in June.

Independent Living Program: Gaye gave the IL program report in Sandy Neyhart's absence. Sandy attended the Chapter 2 Program Administrator's meeting in Arlington, Virginia in March. She had the opportunity to meet with her counterparts from other states representatives from RSA.

There is an issue with the lack of low vision providers in the central part of the state. Dr. Kevin Brown from Vermillion is interested in providing low vision services and is currently working on certification.

The Peer Support group from Vermillion has planned a trip to tour the Rehab Center and utilize the Sioux Falls transit system. Sandy is organizing this event. Sandy also attended a Peer Support meeting in Rapid City.

Vocational Rehabilitation: Eric Weiss reported that SBVI just passed the half point of the federal year and so far have had 56 successful closures. The agency goal is 100 closures for the federally fiscal year, which means we are on pace to reach this year's goal.

Bridget Dowling was hired as the new SBVI counselor in Pierre, and has been in that position since February. Feel free to stop in and meet Bridget when you are in the Pierre area. Bridget will also be responsible for a Rehab Teacher caseload in Hughes and Stanley counties.

The Association of Education and Rehabilitation (AER) professionals conference was held April 2nd-4th in Aberdeen. It was blindness specific training and 23 staff from SBVI attended. There were also staff from North Dakota VR and staff from North

Dakota and South Dakota Schools for the Blind and Visually Impaired in attendance.

A case file review has been scheduled in May. Eric has randomly selected 100 cases to review. All SBVI counselors will be reviewing their peers' cases. This format will offer the opportunity for a thorough review of cases and serve as a good learning experience for those involved.

Support staff training is scheduled for May 14 and 15 in Pierre. Support staff will receive training and engage in discussion with DHS fiscal staff, and will also take part in 2 training seminars provided by BOP.

Dr. Alan Davis will be teaching masters level courses June 11-22 in Pierre. One SBVI counselor is currently pursuing her master's in rehab counseling.

New counselor training will be held in August. Bridget Dowling and Cherie Gerry will be involved in this training along with other new counselors from DRS.

Doug Boone will again come to South Dakota to give O & M training to staff. It will be a two-week course with the first week for beginners and the second week for more advanced training. The training is planned for late October- early November.

RSA On-site Review: Gaye received a tentative agenda for the review. RSA representatives want to visit with stakeholders (which include Board members) by conference call. SBVI staff will continue to prepare for the review by reviewing data and providing information requested by RSA prior to the on site monitoring visit.

Board Vacancies: Gaye received a request to submit names for replacements for Board members whose terms expire in June. Patrick Czerny's term will expire in June and he is eligible for reappointment, however, he will recommend a replacement. Sue Birrenkott's term also expires in June; she is also eligible for reappointment but will recommend someone for a replacement. She has discussed nomination to the board with a parent of a child with a disability who is interested in serving. She will discuss this with Parent Connection prior to submitting the name. Mike Klimisch has served one 3-year term and is willing to serve another term. Ed Pinkman is also willing to serve another term. The Board's Nomination Committee (which consists of the executive committee) will review the names submitted for board replacement when received.

SBVI Board will need to recommend a member for appointment to the SILC. Pat Czerny is the current board representative on the SILC.

Workforce Development Council (WDC) has had a vacancy on the Board of SBVI for quite some time. Gaye will ask a member from WDC to present at the next meeting.

Board Activities: The Board purchased a table to display information about SDAB, NFB and the Board at Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol. Unfortunately, members from the organizations were not available to participate in the disability awareness day events.

The Governors Awards Luncheon was held in March. The Board of SBVI was one of the sponsors for this event. Patrick Czerny received the Distinguished Service Award, and Julaine Arient-

Rollman received the Public Service Award. The Board contributed letters of support for both of these very deserving award recipients.

SDAB sponsored the public meeting in Sioux Falls and NFB will sponsor the public meeting in Pierre. Board attendance at both SDAB and NFB conventions is encouraged. Please contact the office if you are interested in attending. Consumer stipends are also available for first time attendees.

The Board supported a joint public meeting with BVR and SILC in Aberdeen. Aberdeen has some successful initiatives which promote the hiring of people with disabilities. This public meeting was held after a seminar by Tim Gard entitled "A Comic Vision". The Board received a thank you letter from Aberdeen Association of Human Resource Managers for their support of the public meeting. Notes from the meeting will be shared with Board members.

Director's Report: Awards were presented to staff members/offices at Mid-Winter in March. Those receiving recognition were Eric Weiss for receiving his Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling; Dawn Brush receiving her undergraduate from Northern State University; Nancy Kelsey and Laurie Megard for completing training offered through Lighthouse International; the outstanding team award went to the Aberdeen district office; Rehab Teacher production award was given to Mary Milne; counselor production award was given to Julaine Arient-Rollman; Mary Tommeraasen received her 20 years of service award; and Nicole Gregor received the support staff award. Notes and thank you letters from consumers were also read during the awards presentation.

SBVI needs ideas for the Visions newsletter that will be distributed in July. Topics included will be information on assistive technology, another Board member bio for "meet the Board member" section, and information on consumer organizations for the blind and visually impaired. If you have any other ideas, please contact Gaye or Eric.

Focus on Success is scheduled for September 30-October 2, 2008, in Sioux Falls. If Board members know of any presenters they think would be beneficial, contact Gaye or Eric with the information.

Rita Weber has joined a State Rehabilitation Council virtual workgroup which includes Board chairs from other state blind agencies who meet via teleconference to discuss issues and activities of councils and boards around the nation. Gaye participated in the first two calls as Rita had conflicts with participating. The virtual workgroup is a good opportunity to get ideas and input from state rehab council members from a variety of states. Any board member willing to participate in the workgroup should inform Rita or Gaye.

The board recommended that Matt Daigle's submission be selected as the SBVI logo. Matt will be notified and given the \$50 prize contributed by SD Rehabilitation Action.

The next Board meeting will be held June 22, 2007, in Pierre. More information will be mailed at a later date.

Wesley Scholl made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ed Pinkman seconded, motion carried. Meeting adjourned.